

In the Claims:

1. (currently amended) In a cooler for beverage containers wherein the beverage containers are chilled by direct contact with ice and ice water, said cooler having walls and a bottom defining in combination a main cooling compartment accessible through an open top and sized to retain multiple beverage containers along said bottom, the improvement comprising:

a generally vertically oriented chute sized to receive horizontally disposed beverage containers in a generally vertical stack, said chute having a lower opening providing ingress into said main cooling compartment; and

a stationary chute ramp member positioned within said chute, said chute ramp member directing said lowermost beverage container horizontally through said opening ~~whereby the lowermost beverage container within said chute is directed horizontally~~ along said bottom and into said main cooling compartment.

2. (canceled)

3. (currently amended) The cooler of claim 2 1, the improvement further comprising an opposing stationary ramp member positioned across said bottom opposite said stationary chute ramp member, said opposing stationary ramp member directing said beverage containers vertically within said main cooling compartment.

4. (original) The cooler of claim 1, wherein said chute is defined by a divider wall positioned between two opposing walls of said cooler and adjacent a remaining wall of said cooler.

5. (original) The cooler of claim 4, wherein said divider wall is removable.

6. (original) The cooler of claim 5, the improvement further comprising retaining means on said two opposing walls of said cooler to retain said divider wall.

7. (original) The cooler of claim 6, wherein said retaining means comprise slots in said two opposing walls of said cooler.

8. (original) The cooler of claim 6, wherein said retaining means comprise brackets on said two opposing walls of said cooler.

9. (currently amended) The cooler of claim 2 1, wherein said stationary chute ramp member is removable from said cooler.

10. (currently amended) The cooler of claim 3, wherein said stationary chute ramp member and said stationary opposing ramp member are removable from said cooler.

11. (currently amended) The cooler of claim 2 1, wherein said chute is defined by a divider wall positioned between two opposing walls of said cooler and adjacent a remaining wall of said cooler, and wherein said divider wall[,] and said stationary chute ramp member are removable from said cooler.

12. (currently amended) The cooler of claim 3, wherein said chute is defined by a divider wall positioned between two opposing walls of said cooler and adjacent a remaining wall of said cooler, and wherein said divider wall, said stationary chute [cute] ramp member and said opposing stationary ramp member are removable from said cooler.

13. (original) The cooler of claim 5, wherein said cooler further comprises a lid member, and the improvement further comprises a slot disposed within said lid member sized to receive said divider wall for storage.

14. (original) The cooler of claim 3, the improvement further comprising a shelf extending from said lower opening of said chute and across said bottom of said cooler.

15. (original) The cooler of claim 14, the improvement further comprising a reversing ramp member positioned on a wall of said cooler above said opposing ramp member, whereby said beverage cans are diverted onto said shelf.

16. (original) The cooler of claim 4, the improvement further comprising apertures positioned in said divider wall.

17. (currently amended) A cooler for beverage containers wherein beverage containers are chilled by direct contact with ice and ice water, said cooler comprising in combination:

four walls, a bottom, an open top, and a lid adapted to cover said open top;

a divider wall extending between two opposing walls of said four walls and positioned generally parallel to another of said walls, said divider wall having a bottom edge spaced from said bottom to define a lower opening, whereby the combination of said divider wall and said another of said walls defines a chute adapted to receive beverage containers aligned in a generally vertical stack; and

a stationary chute ramp member positioned at the junction of said bottom and said another of said walls, whereby said stationary chute ramp member directs the lowermost of said beverage containers disposed in said chute horizontally through said lower opening and into said main cooling compartment.

18. (currently amended) The cooler of claim 17, further comprising an opposing stationary ramp member at the junction of said bottom and one of said side walls opposite from said stationary chute ramp member, whereby said opposing stationary ramp member directs said beverage containers in the vertical direction.

19. (original) The cooler of claim 17, wherein said divider wall is removable.

20. (currently amended) The cooler of claim 19, wherein said stationary chute ramp member is removable.

21. (original) The cooler of claim 18, wherein said divider wall is removable.

22. (currently amended) The cooler of claim 21, wherein said stationary chute ramp member and said opposing stationary ramp member are removable.

23. (original) The cooler of claim 17, further comprising apertures positioned in said divider wall.

24. (original) The cooler of claim 19, further comprising retainer means positioned on said two opposing walls to retain said divider wall.

25. (original) The cooler of claim 24, wherein said retainer means comprises slots positioned on said two opposing walls.

26. (original) The cooler of claim 24, wherein said retainer means comprises brackets positioned on said two opposing walls.

27. (original) The cooler of claim 19, further comprising a slot disposed within said lid, said slot adapted to receive said divider wall for storage.